

londondiver

MAY 2003

THE MAGAZINE OF BSAC LONDON NO.1 BRANCH



sponsored by the TMS Group



As a newcomer to the club and this magazine (and, for that matter, to diving), and for this, my first issue as editor, I thought I might take the opportunity to tell you all a little about me, and what brought me to diving. And for that, we're going to have to go right back to the beginning.

As a kid, I used to love swimming. No, scratch that, I hated swimming, or rather the bit that involved flapping my arms and legs around in an effort to propel myself across the surface. What I did love (apart from throwing myself in the deep end as if flung by B.A. from the *A-Team*) was swimming around at the bottom of the pool.

I had a variety of cheap and cheerful masks and fins with which I would amuse myself endlessly in the bath (no sniggering please). At one point, I leapt from a neighbour's paddling pool, Archimedes-style, thinking I had invented a device which would render redundant the aqualung. Compressed air? ... ha! Yes, the simple addition of a pair of swimming goggles worn underneath a cheap kiddie's mask (thus raising it slightly off the face) allowed me to breath underwater through my nose. Tested with apparently equal success by my (by now very impressed) friends, this device would surely revolutionise the diving world.

If nothing else, the fact that you are all still humping large metal cylinders around has probably lead you to the conclusion that my invention was somewhat scientifically suspect. We all learn one way or another, me aged nine on the 'deepwater trials' of my new miracle contraption as, taking in a lungful of water through my nose, it quickly dawned on me that the local public baths were a darn site deeper than the three inches of water in the paddling pool and had the added disadvantage of not allowing the back of the mask to have contact with the air on the surface, the only reason why my 'breathing' device had ever worked!

Anyway, I grew up, stopped going swimming, read a lot of dull books that qualified me for a dull job, and that about brings us up to date. But not quite. Last autumn, I went on holiday. Nothing remarkable in that: two weeks in the sun, cheep beer, comedy sunburn, sand in the bedclothes... the usual. Except for one thing, I did some snorkelling to pass the time ... with fish, real ones and lots of 'em. I returned with an awoken enthusiasm for my childhood passion (only this time minus any imaginary soldiers of fortune with ridiculous mohawks). Why had I never learned to dive, and why don't I do it now?

So, to cut a long story short (ah, too late), I searched around, rejected the idea of 'qualifying' with a PADI Open Puddle Warm Weather Certificate and found you guys instead. So four months (and two committees) later, I find myself with a brand new hobby (OK, I admit it, obsession). I'd like to thank everyone in the club for making me feel so welcome, those who have given of their time to instruct me and especially those foolhardy enough to actually get in the water with me. Thank you one and all.

Anyway, back to *London Diver*. This issue, direct from your D.O., we've got the long awaited, much debated, make sure your tubes are fully inflated..., guide to being a club boat handler. We also have the official post-match report on the Easter weekend trip to Plymouth, plus news about France, and a little bit more besides.

The next issue will be out in a couple of months which gives you all plenty of time to get writing. See everyone down at the clubroom, the pub or the next dive site, and I promise to leave my prototype twin-walled shallow-water nose-rebreather at home.

Joe Hesketh, Editor

Please email your articles, etc. to
jhesketh@*.com** or phone me on 07787
5****9 for my address details.

chairman's chatter



It has been a later start to the season than usual due to Easter falling late, but I'm pleased to say it was a relatively good start. We had a good turn out in Plymouth, with a mixture of old faces washing the cobwebs off their kit and new faces washing the price tags off theirs. The weather could have been a bit kinder after taunting us in early April with some glorious sunshine, so we didn't make it out to some of the top dive spots such as the Eddystone. However, I think everyone enjoyed their dives around the Mewstone and at Hillsea Point – I was very pleased to see my first ever angler fish (monk fish for Waitrose shoppers) and just slightly embarrassed to mistake it for something that doesn't look all that similar! Must have been the cold water numbing my brain, my previous diving trip was in Cuban waters of 27 degrees (aaah, lovely), but then the food was better in Plymouth (yes, even that curry).

I hope our new members enjoyed the trip and began to understand how our club really operates. The Mount Batten Centre is a relatively straightforward place to run a dive with easy launching and mooring, and very convenient access to food, drink, fuel and air. Even so, there's still plenty of work involved and every little bit of assistance helps, even it is just helping keep the records or collect

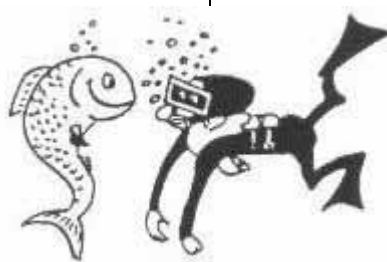
money. Even when we're not away diving, a lot of work goes on behind the scenes at the club. Some of it is very mundane indeed, as the lucky people will tell you who sat and stuck labels on our marketing fliers. Not much fun, but someone has to do it.

If you think you can handle a bit more responsibility than label sticking, we're always looking for people to help run 'the desk' on Tuesday nights. The combined effect of having all our belongings in storage for months and the introduction of the new training scheme last autumn has meant it's taken a while to things organised again.

There's nothing really difficult though and one of the main things is dealing with enquiries. All this takes is a reasonable knowledge of how the club runs and some time to chat to potential new members.

Please let me know if you want to help with this, as this will allow the instructors to concentrate on teaching on Tuesday evenings.

Tuesday nights back at the Perseverance pub are going well, with even laggards from the pool arriving at 9.30pm being able to order a freshly made sandwich (and chips). Mary, the manageress, is making us very welcome and the use of the upstairs room is invaluable for meetings and lectures, so please repay her generosity to the branch by supporting her business.



Talking of meetings, as long as I've been a member of this club, there have been complaints about lack of communication. 'Branch Notices' were one solution to that and used to be held every Tuesday, upstairs in the pub, once everyone got there after pool training. This is where arrangements for dives and training were discussed, social events advertised etc. *London Diver* is great for news and stories but not really suited to last minute changes of plan or handing out of those all important directions to the dive site. With the advent of email, and particularly out of the main diving season, once a week wasn't really necessary. A couple of years ago we tried once a month, and that was a bit better. This year's plan is that the Tuesday before each dive trip, we will do 'Branch Notices', in the

Perseverance as soon after 9:30pm as possible. I'm reliably informed that you can all look at your dive calendar and work out which Tuesdays that means. If you're going on the dive trip that weekend/week you definitely need to be there to find out where you should be and when. If you're not going on the dive, you should come along anyway to find out what else is going on and to be sociable. A bit more administration: enclosed with this magazine is an updated branch contacts list. If anything is incorrect or missing, please let Keith Graham, our membership secretary, know. If it's wrong on the list, it means it's wrong on the branch records. And if your details change in future, guess what, please let Keith know. Catch him on Tuesday nights, leave a message on the club answer phone (020 7723 8336) or email him on keith.graham100@btopenworld.com.

Finally a bit of social business. The committee will shortly be putting their heads together to sort out a celebration for the branch's 50th anniversary, later this year. The committee consists of 8 advanced divers and 2 dive leaders, but not necessarily any advanced party planners, and some of us are definitely better at inflating SMBs than balloons. All suggestions for venues or themes will be very welcome, and even if you don't have any ideas, but would be willing to help out with

the organisation, please (please, please, please) let one of us know.

Last summer we held a number of presentations on Tuesday nights about various things related to diving. These were arranged to keep people off the streets whilst the pool was closed for refurbishment. However, the turnout and feedback was excellent, and it's something we'd like to carry on. Once Reg (Vallintine) has finished his authoring duties, I hope we can lure him back for another session of history, and maybe even some book signing. But if there's anything else you feel would be of interest to branch members and make a good evening, then please let me know.

I think that's it for now, see you on a Tuesday soon.

Clare



"DON'T EAT THE HARD BIT ON ITS BACK, THEY MAKE YOU FART!"

the d.o. reports...

Let me start by saying a big welcome and thank you, to Joe our new Magazine Editor. I would also like to apologise publicly for getting my article to him so late on Sunday afternoon (you must hassle people Joe! *[don't worry Dave, I won't hold it against you ... much! - Ed]*).



Plymouth was the first dive of the new committee. It was attended by nineteen branch members, although we had the pleasure of the company of another five people in the form of one guest dive by Richard (well worth the £15.00!) and a motley crew with their own boat headed by Keith and Gary. So all in all, it was well attended.

As usual with the Easter weather we were limited to the dive sites that the wind and waves would let us get to. Nonetheless, we managed seventy four dives. I would like to thank all the instructors who took our new crop of novices (or would be Ocean Divers ... or whatever we are supposed to call new people undergoing training these days?) on some of their first sea dives and furthered their training over the weekend (seasickness does get better with practice..... honest!). I must also thank TJ who brought *Percy 1* down to Plymouth and as usual (against doctor's advice, with his broken foot!) was always there to help. You just can't keep a good man down!

There were a couple of things that concerned me over the weekend. One thing was one of our new novices being taken out on the boat for a dive without having completed all of his pool training. A BIG slap on the wrist to myself for not keeping on top of everybody's training. However, no harm done this time, but can I ask all instructors to help me make sure that this doesn't happen again. The second was somebody diving whilst taking antibiotics. Obviously there is a need to remind everybody that almost no medicines

have been hyperbarically tested and so complications/side effects that may arise whilst taking them and diving remain unknown. If you are taking any medication and are in any doubt as to whether you can dive or not please come and talk to me.

Unfortunately the planed dive to Swanage had to be cancelled due to a lack of suitably qualified people on the list. This is a shame as Swanage would have been a good place for some of the newer people to have continued their training. I know that some people didn't put their names on the list and were "waiting and seeing" what the weather would be doing before deciding to go, or not go, as the case may be. I understand this position but if you think you may attend a dive can you please put your name on the lists in the equipment room. It helps with the planning and decision making especially if the dive looks 'iffy'. If you're a 'maybe', just indicate that on the list, thanks.

Having said that, although the Swanage dive was cancelled due to a lack of experience, as I write (Sunday afternoon when we were supposed to be diving) there are winds blowing from the south at force 6-7, so the diving would have been cancelled due to the weather in any case!

Pembroke is also looking bottom heavy on the experience front, but Keith is writing something about that further on in the magazine (see page 12).



Date Changes



Lack of experience on dive sites is obviously going to be a problem this year. So in an effort to make sure dives happen, the committee has had to alter some of the calendar to guarantee enough experience attending the dives. Therefore, the dive to Bognor will now take place a week earlier on 28th and 29th of June. Also, the dive to Northumbria has been moved slightly back to

July 10th – 13th (and slightly upwards to North Berwick).

Pool Training

Most of the new crop of trainees have virtually completed their pool training. So why not bring a friend down to the club for a “Come and try it”? You never know, they just might get hooked!

On the subject of the pool some people (me included!) have recently been coming down to the equipment room dripping wet straight from the pool, leaving the stairs wet and VERY slippery. If we continue to do this, sooner or later one of us, or another leisure centre user, is

going to have an accident. WE MUST STOP THIS before that accident occurs! So please get changed and then bring your kit downstairs.



If you have recently finished your training, come down to the pool and talk to any of the instructors about some extra training (all the good bits that have been removed from the training in an effort to make it competitive!) and have some fun and learn something at the same time.

Keep it safe.

Dave



CLUB OUTING TO THE COMEDY CLUB AT EALING STUDIOS, EALING

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**If you would like a ticket, please tell
Gillian (B) or Sarah by Tuesday 27 May**

equipment matters

The club's pool cylinders are currently being tested. We still have some in the equipment room, but it may help if some people could bring their own down to the pool over the next couple of weeks.



We have two cylinders and a regulator 'missing' at the moment. They were all accounted for when the equipment was locked away under the pool after the final dive of last season. So can everybody check under their beds or wherever you all keep your dive gear to make sure that it isn't hiding there and send it home if it is.

Thanks.

Ricky

training matters

Good news for all those who have been pestering (sorry, I mean asking) me about the Dive Leader course. The dates have now been set, to start on the 13th May, and will involve a total of thirteen lectures.

I have posted a schedule on the Training notice board and everyone who has completed the Sports Diver lectures is welcome to attend the lectures, although we may have to limit/prioritise the places for the practical classes due to the limited number of manikins we have, but I am trying to address that.

If you want to attend and have done the old Sports Diver scheme (this should be all those interested), you must attend the first two lectures as these cover the transition from the old training scheme to the new scheme. If you miss any others you will have opportunities to attend these in the future.

If you only have one or two lectures to complete on the old scheme, please contact me as soon as possible, and we will see if we can run these in addition. However there are a lot of changes from the old scheme, so I recommend anyone who is serious and/or wants to become an instructor attends them, to build up their knowledge. I apologise to all those who have been waiting for this, but there has been quite a lot going on recently, and we have had to do a lot of work for the transition of the new training scheme.

Well done to all those who have been working hard on the Ocean Diver course over the past few months and have nearly finished. I hope

you all enjoyed your first dives in open water. I hope to start the Sport Diver lectures once the Dive Leader lectures are complete, but in the meantime, use the time to get the diving experience.

Those of you who have been busy training in the pool may have been getting frustrated about the amount of time each lesson takes, and not always being able to do both a theory and a pool lesson in the same session, as we used to do. This is being addressed: Dave has been looking at breaking down the Ocean Diver course a bit more, into shorter lessons. This will allow the course to be completed over fewer weeks, since you will

be using your time more effectively. We hope it will also address some of the problems that we are finding in the new scheme. By spreading it out over a couple of extra weeks, we hope there will also be more practice of basic skills to build water confidence. But remember, it is dependent on everyone getting to the club as close to 7pm as they can, to fit everything in.

At the end of the day, it is more important that everyone is confident and competent underwater, it is not just about getting signatures - something we all seem to forget in our keenness to get in the open

water.

Enough of my rambling, you are probably ready for bed if not fast asleep by now (and it's only mid-day [er, that kinda depends on when you're reading this, Tobias ... Ed]).

Safe and enjoyable diving.

Tobias



plymouth – the truth...

Easter weekend saw some twenty-odd of us, plus *Percy*, *Percy Too* and the majority of the populace of greater London heading down the A303 to Plymouth, where, back in the dark ages, TJ had taken the far-sighted precaution of booking accommodation at the Mount Batten water sports centre.

Contrary to the rest of the UK, we had good weather and reasonably calm seas, although some may argue the (pitch and) toss over the latter – special thanks go to Chris Cole for running through the list of the greasiest foods he could think of on the way back from Darren’s first open water dive (aka OW fish feeding). Dives were made on the Mew Stone, Hillsea Point, the Mew Stone, the breakwater, the Mew Stone and then, for a change, the Mew Stone. That said, we saw lots of starfish, kelp, anemones, crabs, wrasse, cuttlefish and even a thorny-backed ray (or maybe not!). The viz was good, the water wasn’t too cold, the accommodation was clean, with plentiful hot water and friendly staff, the beer was plentiful and the Easter eggs most welcome (thanks Sarah, Gillian and Nicky!). Many thanks to the marshals for managing to see that everyone got the option of two dives a day and, as ever,



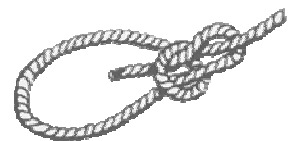
the instructors were ready, willing and able to ensure that buddies were available for the less experienced. Some quick turnarounds were made and there were some interesting techniques

adopted for pulling the trolley from the pontoon back to the centre – suffice it to say that I wouldn’t want to be in the car with certain people if that’s an example of their driving technique! *[guess who had to share with one of the culprits...only kidding Alex - Ed]*

Richard and Morgan formed a team to strike terror into all sea life - amazing how the enthusiasm grows with the prospect of hands-on marine biology and a demonstration of ‘dogfish darts’. Percy, in best Plymouth tradition, broke down at sea with remarkably similar problems to last time and limped back to shore to be tenderly

looked after by Nigel and TJ – we appreciate it, guys! Alex tried to imitate the Michelin man on the surface when his drysuit dump valve reversed and filled the suit with a mixture of air and water. Morals: don’t let Richard drive the boat (when it breaks down twice when you’re driving it begins to look too suspicious to be an accident...) and don’t let Tobias fix your dump valve!

Having kindly volunteered to tie my reel to my SMB, Bernie then undertook to demonstrate how to tie a bowline – rabbits, holes, trees, etc. – a knot which he proudly claimed, “could hold the Queen Mary”. Much amusement then when I took the SMB out to find that the knot had come undone!



After the stories from prior years, a visit to the fish and chip shop on the Barbican had to be made to check out the waistline and toupee of the proprietor – one had obviously grown and one was just obvious. Valiant efforts were made to eat things seen on the dives, although top marks have to go to anyone who consumed the hideous ‘Nepalese cocktail’ we were given at the Indian ...

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boat handling

As promised in the newsletter that we sent out at the start of this committee, I intend to dissolve the mystique that seems to surround boat handling within the branch. In an effort to do this, I have created different 'Grades' of boat handlers (see the categories on page 10).



First lets look at the position we are in within the branch. We are desperately short of boat handlers. Some dives have to be

cancelled because there is nobody capable of towing, launching, recovering and driving the boat. There are very few people in this branch that can honestly claim to fit into category 'A' but that is not a problem, as the people who fit into category 'B' or 'C' can also easily make a dive possible. I intend to talk to all the people who currently drive the boat (including the people who need a little supervision), as well as anybody who shows an interest in learning how to drive the boat/trailer (it's up to you to come and see me!). I will be asking you all to self assess your abilities and tell me where you honestly think you fit into the grading below. Hopefully we will all agree with the self assessments. But if not, then between the people who are obvious 'A's', we will adjust your grading up or down accordingly and talk to you to explain why. I realise this may cause a bit of friction and many people will fall between 'Grades'. In which case it would be better to err on the side of caution and downgrade yourself (i.e. C+ or D- etc).

When we have agreed names/grades, a list will be made available for any marshal as an aid in the planning of a dive. Once somebody has broadened their experience they will be upgraded accordingly.

As for learning to drive the boat/trailer, or improving your current level of ability, there is

no substitute for practice, and that involves going to an awful lot of dive sites and putting in the hours behind the wheel, be it boat wheel or Land Rover wheel.

On any dive site there are lots of things to think about, so if you seem to be getting ignored... you're not... It's just that there are other things on the minds of the people who are running the dive. So please be a pest and remind us that you need the training as much as the club needs you to become a good boat handler!

Finally, let's not let this be 'cast in stone'. It is the first time in many years that a system has been introduced to clarify 'how to become a London Branch boat handler'. The only thing that I am sure of, is that this is not perfect.....But it's a start!

Keep it safe.

Dave



grading of boat handlers

A

These people can tow the RIB to any location and deal with any of the 'usual' mechanical problems associated with the trailer and Land Rover, such as replacing wheel bearings, sorting out brake/electrical problems, etc. They can launch and recover the boat from any slip that it is possible for our RIB to be launched from with the minimum of help and in any conditions (within reason!). They will have a working knowledge of chart work, tides and navigation and have an understanding of the echo sounder and GPS. They will be able to take the boat unprepared from the trailer and take divers to and from any dive site within the range of our RIB including out of site of land and in unfamiliar waters. They will be able to handle the RIB in close quarters situations such as crowded marinas with confidence. They will be able to 'read' the sea and weather conditions and make decisions with regard to safety 'on site' such as where, and indeed if, any dive is to go ahead. They will be able to decide whether to leave the RIB in the water, or if it is prudent (depending on incoming weather conditions, etc.) to retrieve the RIB at the end of each day, or indeed to cancel all diving during the day. They will also be able to deal with most fixable problems associated with the RIB on site, or if necessary at sea. They will obviously have a working knowledge of all safety equipment on board. In short they can carry out all of the above procedures with the minimum of help and fuss.

B

These people can tow the RIB to any location. They can launch and recover the boat from most slips with a little help and in reasonable conditions. They will have a reasonable knowledge of chart work, tides and navigation and have an understanding of the echo sounder and GPS. They will be able to take the boat unprepared from the trailer and take divers to and from any dive site within sight of land and in familiar waters. They will be able to handle the RIB in close quarters situations such as crowded marinas with care. They will be able to 'read' the sea and weather conditions and make decisions with regard to safety 'on site' such as where, and indeed if, any dive is to go ahead. They will be able to decide whether to leave the RIB in the water, or if it is prudent (depending on incoming weather conditions, etc.) to retrieve the RIB at the end of each day, or indeed to cancel all diving during the day. They will obviously have a working knowledge of all safety equipment on board.

C

These people can tow the RIB to any familiar location and they can launch and recover the boat from 'easy' slips with some assistance and guidance. These people will have a limited knowledge of chart work, tides and navigation. They will be able to use the basic functions of the echo sounder. They will be able to take divers to and from any dive site within site of land and in familiar waters with some shore based guidance. They will be able to handle the RIB in close quarters situations such as crowded marinas with a little assistance. They will be able to 'read' the sea and weather conditions over the duration of a dive. They will obviously have a working knowledge of all safety equipment on board.

D

These people should have a rudimentary knowledge of chart work, tides and navigation. They will be able to take the prepared boat from a mooring or jetty during the course of a day's diving. They will be able to take divers to and from any dive site that is already known to them with little or no guidance. They will be able to use the basic functions of the echo sounder. They would not be expected to handle the RIB in close quarters situations such as crowded marinas without some assistance. They will be able to 'read' the sea and weather conditions over the duration of a dive. They will obviously have a working knowledge of all safety equipment on board.

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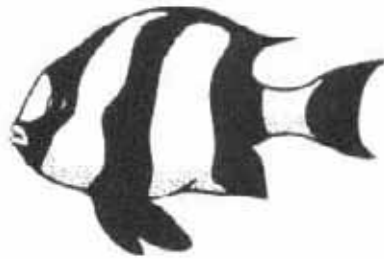
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E

These people should have a rudimentary knowledge of chart work, tides and navigation. They will be able to take the boat from a mooring or jetty during the course of a day's diving and they will be able to take divers to and from any dive site whilst under nominal supervision. They will be able to use the basic functions of the echo sounder. They would not be expected to handle the RIB in close quarters situations such as crowded marinas without assistance. They will not be expected to be able to 'read' the sea and weather conditions. They should however have a working knowledge of all safety equipment on board.

F

These people are undeniably trainees. They will have shown an interest in boat handling and should have attended a BSAC or RYA boat handling course. They will be closely supervised during all stages of operations whilst they are gaining experience within the branch.



news about the pembroke trip

Pembroke is tottering on the edge of being cancelled at the moment because of lack of experienced divers on this dive. At present there are only two that can take novices in for a dive, and with five novices, some of which require training, we could not possibly cater for them as the experienced divers will also have to do boat handling, leaving only one person available at any time to take in a novice. At the moment, with only six divers who can dive without supervision on the list, the dive can still go ahead providing we cut back to two novices, or get more divers qualified to take in novices. We need more experienced divers or less novices attending this dive, let's hope the latter is not necessary.

Will any experienced divers who wish to go to Pembroke please contact me as early as possible, plus anyone who would be prepared to accompany me with the boat, please also get in touch. I will keep everyone on the list informed of developments, keep you fingers crossed, and lets hope the weather does not let us down either.

I would just like to say this is not the norm. It's just that an unusual set of circumstances has conspired against us, tying up some of our instructors and experienced divers on the Pembroke weekend, i.e. Nigel's 50th birthday (sorry for declaring your half century Nigel – you've joined the old git club now!) and Mel and Jamie tying the knot - I suppose no time is a good time for that (only kidding).

Cheers.

Keith

Phone 020 8*** **

Mobile 07931 *** **

e-mail: keith.graham100@*****.com

the art of marshalling...



"...oh, and don't forget to get a weather report in the week beforehand, and have you checked what times we can launch from the slip, and who needs what training and who has a season ticket and how is the boat getting there, and and and..."

For those of you who have never marshalled a dive trip, just the thought of it is probably enough to take all the fun out the weekend. Those who have marshalled dive weekends will know that getting everything right is sometimes still more of an art than a science. Yes, BSAC runs some good courses: chartwork and position fixing, dive planning and marshalling - but nothing is ever quite as easy as it seems in the classroom.

I have done a lot of marshalling, pretty much six days a week for two years whilst working in Fiji, so theoretically I am an expert. However I have not marshalled a dive with London No.1 since April '98 and suddenly I feel a bit out of control. Every club has it's own way of doing things.



There are forms for recording depths and times, forms to track who has paid and who has season tickets, fixed expedition fees for certain dive sites, favourite camp grounds and B&Bs and so on - none of which I am currently familiar with. Hence, I am pestering people with questions - trying to squeeze out all the information I can so that August's dive to Weymouth is a success.

Probably 99% of all the information I need is in someone's head or scribbled down on scrap paper, lying in piles on their kitchen table, so trying to get it is difficult. And the next trip to Weymouth will be the same - the marshal will come around pestering me for what I know about B&Bs and where is the best place to get air fills. It would therefore seem to make sense to bring together that information so that the marshals don't have to chase around in ever decreasing circles.

Unfortunately, this means that over the coming months I will be pestering even more people and asking even more questions, trying to bring together the basic marshalling details for various dive sites. Starting with the popular ones - Plymouth, Weymouth, Cornwall, Farnes, Swanage, Bognor, etc. and if successful, slowly taking in more and more.

We are an old club and this has been done before - most sensible ideas have - but it has not been done for a while. B&Bs change, the club cupboard seems to be full of lots of old dusty charts of Plymouth Sound but not much else, the wreck book is around - but how many people know about it and when was it last updated - and how many people really know what marks have we already got in the GPS?

Marshalling is hard work - lots of organising people and lots of things to remember - especially when we all have full time jobs. But a lot of the hard work has already been done before and we need to take advantage of that. The South Coast is only so long, certain slips are easier to launch from and some towns are more welcoming of divers than others. Going to the same places is inevitable but if we actually look at the number of dive sites we actually dive on, it is relatively few compared to what is available. In an ideal world, marshalling the land based part of a dive weekend should be the easiest bit - all our marshalling energies should be saved for finding new dive sites.

So to avoid harassment from me, I would ask people to start digging out any details that they have. Good B&Bs, B&Bs to be avoided at all costs, favourite camp sites, lists of wrecks you have dived as well as those you've read about and would like to dive. And if you have no information but think you would like to marshal a dive (or if the next qualification insists upon it) come and see me. The more marshals the merrier.

Jamie

more marvellous marketing machinations from uncle jeff

Well, the diving season is truly upon us! A fine start was made at Plymouth and the sun still seems to be shining, everyone is happy and all looks promising! So indulge me for a mo' and allow me to pontificate on the structure and style of London Branch. Much has changed over the twenty seven years I have been in the branch, but basically we are still a training and diving branch with a fair throughput of divers. Some train and move on, a percentage stay and dive with us for years, and fewer still go on to instruct and run the branch. This is a little unusual as most BSAC branches tend to be more diving and less training, however, this model has worked for us for years, giving us a cosmopolitan and vibrant branch that can both provide quality training and excellent diving. Unfortunately, the model starts to break down if you don't get the numbers, and due to a number of factors our numbers have been steadily dropping for many years.

We're now at the point where we really, really need to do something about it. We need more divers, ideally a mix of froglets and experienced, to start building the branch back up again. We all need to do our bit. It doesn't take much and we're not asking for a superhuman effort from anyone. We've produced new advertising flyers which we'll be spreading about and one is also enclosed with this issue. Please put it up in your workplace with a note on it asking people to speak to you to find out more. Larger posters are available - please ask me if you want one. We also have a great new website at www.londondiver.com and you can suggest people have a look at that as well. We'll be doing more work on the website and with Google shortly to drive more traffic to the site

and are hoping for more new recruits through it, so fingers crossed for lots of clicks.

As always - suggestions always welcome - catch me at the pub or drop me an email at Jeff@Inception.IT.

Jeff



a call to arms

Ladies and Gentlemen, our dear branch has been through the wars of late, with having no pool last year and the changes regarding the committee. I am sure everyone wants to draw a line under the whole year and so do I. We now have a structure within the branch that should allow us to move forward, so let's do just that.

In the past I feel we have been guilty of asking the committee to do everything and the committee at the time did just that. "What is wrong with that?" I hear you say, "surely that is their job". Well, my diving buddies, this article says it is not. Think about the definitions of two terms, 'the club' and 'the committee'. I define the former as, 'a group of individuals who come together to all follow a shared interest' and the latter as 'a group elected by a club to take legal responsibility for the running of that club'. Please note, dear reader, nowhere in my definitions are jobs mentioned, the committee are there because, under BSAC and inland revenue rules, they have to be there.

So you say, "What is your point? Oh man, who hears voices in his head". We are the club, yes dear reader you, me and the rest of the Herberts who meet every Tuesday evening to go underwater for fun. It is not up to the committee to make things happen or to encourage your interest, it is up to us.

There are a thousand and one things to be done and we are all capable of doing something. There is boat handling [*see Dave's article on page 9 for more on that - Ed*]), there is

instructing, marshalling, kit maintenance, etc, etc. If you have an interest, come and speak to some one who does it already and we are not all on the committee.

Do not just limit your thinking to the dive calendar, if you want to peruse some learning and see a course you can do, speak to people on a Tuesday and see if you can get someone to join you. If you want to do some adventurous diving, find an adventurous diver

and try and plan something, if you want to get into underwater photography, find a camera person and plan something.

The upshot of this article is to say, “ask not what London Number One Branch can do for you, ask what you can do for London Number One Branch”.

James Astrop

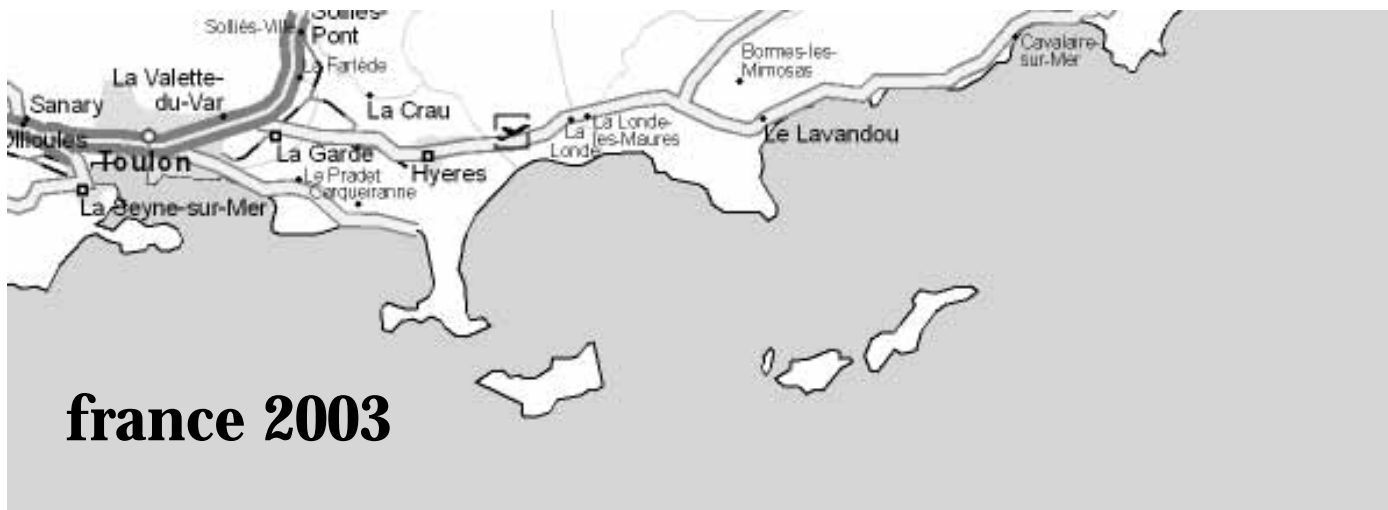


humour...

This man is stranded on a desert island, all alone for ten years. One day, he sees a speck in the horizon. He thinks to himself, “It’s not a ship”. The speck gets a



little closer and he thinks, “It’s not a boat”. The speck gets even closer and he thinks, “It’s not a raft”. Then, out of the surf comes this gorgeous blonde woman, wearing a wetsuit and scuba gear. She comes up to the man and she says, “How long has it been since you’ve had a cigarette?”. “Ten years!” he says. She reaches over, unzips this waterproof pocket on her left sleeve and pulls out a pack of fresh cigarettes. He takes one, lights it, takes a long drag and says, “Man, oh man! Is that good!”. Then she asked, “How long has it been since you had a drink of whiskey?”. He replies, “Ten years!”. She reaches over, unzips the waterproof pocket on her right sleeve, pulls out a flask and gives it to him. He takes a long swig and says, “Wow, that’s fantastic!”. Then she starts unzipping the long zipper that runs down the front of her wetsuit and she says to him, “And how long has it been since you played around?”. And the man cries out, “My God! Don’t tell me you’ve got a set of golf clubs in there, too!”.



france 2003

France is looking as popular as ever this year with over twenty names on the list. You can expect me to start collecting expedition fees (£70) so don't start hiding when you see me coming! Both boats are



booked onto the ferry and as usual TJ has come up trumps and will tow *Percy 1* down for us. Obviously, France is an expensive trip for the club, so it is important that it is well supported. The

expedition fee goes towards the ferry fees, the motorway tolls through France and fuel for the journey and the boats, so you can understand the more who come, the cheaper it gets for the club.

You need to be talking to people on the list and teaming up to arrange your accommodation (0033 494 710319, Katryn speaks English, just), your flights (EasyJet from Luton or Gatwick to Nice - the earlier you book the cheaper they are!), and your one way shared car rental from Nice to Le Lavandou. You don't need the car for the full week, just hire one way for both directions (split the cost with your travelling buddies). Or you can drive down in your car and have transport whilst there.

Cylinders and valves can be hired from the adjacent dive school, the club can also hire you valves and stabs if you're prepared to carry them with you. France is a dive not to miss,

and is great value for a warm water foreign diving holiday, check it out!

Nigel

gillian's observations!

This will be the club's fourth trip down to the South of France, and as you know, or may of heard, is a very popular trip for many reasons, not just the excellent diving!!

The diving mostly takes place around the Ile de Port Cros, and a rock called Ile de la Gabinierie. These islands have been a marine nature reserve for around fifty years and I feel are very special. Because of these restrictions around the area the marine life has been allowed to flourish and is in abundance. On most dives, expect to see large groups of grouper [*they should make that the official collective noun! - Ed*],



scorpion fish (check where you put your hands!) plus morays in the rock cracks (sometimes free swimming). If you have a trained eye, you may see octopus - they are extremely inquisitive creatures and if you're patient you can entice them out with something shiny, not your knife please. Once they take hold, you will be surprised how strong they can pull! Keep an eye on your air, and your buddy's too!

In these beautiful blue waters, take time to observe the marine life, don't just go deep and

have a short dive! Look under boulders and rocks, you could be lucky and see a *Grande Cigale de Mer* (slipper lobster), these live on the roof of small cracks and caves. The



worms and much more!

The diving is very relaxed and that's what makes it a holiday. The boat will leave the marina at 9:00 each morning and go skimming across to the islands (as long as the *Mistral* doesn't blow) for the first dive. For lunch we pull into Port Cros harbour where the tanks

underwater meadows (as the French call them) is where you find *Pinna Nobilis*, one of the largest shells in the world, an

oversized mussel that is four-fifths buried in the sand. All this, and not forgetting the beautiful sea fans, sponges and peacock

get filled and we relax in the sun, take a walk, check out the exotic boats and have our surface interval. Then it's on with the suits and out for our second dive, and afterwards back to our base at La Faviare. After putting the boats to bed and de-kitting to the garage storeroom, it's time to do some more relaxing in the bar or on your balcony.

If you are with your family or non-diving partner, sorry but it's too far to come back at lunchtime. The best thing to do is take a day or two off diving, only a suggestion!

A night dive may be arranged for those who so wish, on a small wreck about a mile out from the marina, so don't forget your torches! A 5mm wet suit is the least you will need, some use dry suits but it's not that cold!! Don't forget your flag and whistle, and a small dry bag is useful to keep your lunchtime attire dry. If I think of anything else, I'll put it in the next *London Diver*.

Gillian



Plymouth, continued...

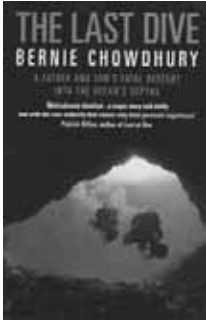
... great idea to pour it into the flower vase, Alex – shame someone else had thought of it first! The Plymouth scene lived up to reputation (think Goth come Rocky Horror) although the drag queens didn't seem to pose a deterrent to returning into town after the girl with the pierced belly-button, improbable clothes and open-toed sandals ("Sandals...? I hadn't made it past the midriff!") got off the

ferry as we were getting on to return back to base...

Megan

For more photos from the Plymouth weekend, plus more club and other diving photos, check out Tobias's website at www.tvv.dircon.co.uk/photos

book review



The Last Dive

A Father and Son's Fatal Descent into the Ocean's Depths

By Bernie Chowdhury

Paperback - 346 pages
Headline; ISBN: 0747264252

The subtitle of this book makes it sound rather morbid; however it is a great insight in the more extreme side of diving. The book looks at the lives of two divers, a father and son, as they learn to dive and sucked up into the thrills of cave and deep wreck exploration. A large part of the book is about how they learned and developed as divers constantly looking for something new to learn and explore. This all leads up to the discovery and exploration of a submarine, the identity of which the two became obsessed with establishing.

This was all happening in the late 80's early 90's when Technical Diving was coming in to its own, and people still thought that Nitrox was the devil's own breath. So the book charts some of the history of this, and the characters involved, many of whom were on the boat on the fatal day it all went wrong. Many of the expeditions discussed in the book have been documented in magazines and it was

fascinating to read a more human version of these events, and hear about the people who write these articles.

The author, Bernie Chowdhury, gives some very open and enlightening accounts of his own experiences, in particular a very serious case of DCS, which came very close to leaving him paralysed. The author is also one of the founders of the magazine *Immersed* which many of you may have seen hidden away on the shelves of dive shops.

This is a very easy book to read, and at times goes over the top with explanations of scuba techniques and equipment, which did get a bit tedious, but are probably necessary to open the book's appeal to non-divers. This did not distract from the main storyline too much, and I may have to start using the 'Martine' effect analogy in my lectures. Once I started, I could not put the book down and really enjoyed it.

Tobias

Have you read a book recently which relates to diving? Morgan and myself are looking for more book reviews and other material we can add to the website to build it up into a useful resource for members and potential members. As part of this, we want to add a book section, where we can do a tie-up with *Amazon*. By doing this we are hoping that we will get links from other sites and higher rankings in search engines.

If you have any ideas for content and are able to contribute, this would be greatly appreciated. You don't need to be technically proficient; our main problem is building up content.

caption competition



Here's an 'interesting' picture taken by Tobias on the Plymouth weekend – now what could Dave be saying here then...? Imaginative suggestions on a postcard (or e-mail) please to the editor before the next issue. The best submission (as judged in a fair but most likely completely arbitrary method as yet to be decided) will win themselves a copy of *The Last Dive* (see book review on page 18).

melanie's minute last minute minutes...

The observant amongst you will have noticed that the trip to Northumberland is now advertised as a trip to North Berwick. That's officially in Scotland (just) so you can count it as another foreign diving holiday!

Mel

Tuesday evenings come to...

THE PERSEVERANCE

for beer, food, news, gossip, etc.

11 Shroton Street, London, NW6 6UG

copy deadline for next issue:

Friday 27 June 2003

**He'll face 30ft. waves,
blizzards, force 9 gales
and sub-zero temperatures.**



Alec Hopper: 2nd Lieutenant of Dover Motor Launch, Sandport, Dover

Photograph: Murray Gifford

All we ask of you is £15.

To: The Director, RNLB, FREEPOST, West Quay Road, Poole, Dorset BH15 1XP.

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- min £1,000)
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